imagin to remove ſin by removing the matter of ſin; for, beſides that it is a huge heap increaſing under the very act of diminiſhing, though ſome part of it may for a time be withdrawn from ſome perſons, it cannot from all, in ſuch a univerſall thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the ſin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treaſure, he has yet one jewell left, ye cannot bereave him of his covetouſneſſe. Baniſh all objects of luſt, ſhut up all youth into the ſevereſt diſcipline that can be exercis'd in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaſte, that came not thither ſo: ſuch great care and wiſdom is requir'd to the right managing of this point. Suppoſe we could expell ſin by this means; look how much we thus expell of ſin, ſo much we expell of vertue: for the matter of them both is the ſame; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This juſtifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, juſtice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profuſenes all deſirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and ſatiety. Why ſhould we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or ſcanting thoſe means, which books freely permitted are, both to the triall of vertue, and the exerciſe of truth. It would be better done to learn that the law muſt needs be frivolous which goes to reſtrain things, uncertainly and yet equally working to good, and to evill. And were I the chooſer, a dram of well-doing ſhould be preferr'd before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evill-doing. For God ſure eſteems the growth and compleating of one vertuous perſon, more then the reſtraint of ten vitious. And albeit what ever thing we hear or ſee, ſitting, walking, travelling, or converſing may be fitly call'd our book, and is of the ſame effect that writings are, yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far inſufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not ſee, not once or oftner, but weekly that continu'd Court-libell againſt the Parlament and City, Printed, as the wet ſheets can witnes, and diſpers't among us, for all that licencing can doe? yet this is the prime ſervice a man would think, wherein this order ſhould give proof of it ſelf. If it were executed, you'l ſay. But certain, if execution be remiſſe or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter, and in other books. If then the order ſhall not be vain and fruſtrat, behold a new labour, Lords and Commons, ye muſt repeal and proſcribe all ſcandalous and unlicenc't books already printed and divulg'd; after ye have drawn

drawn them up into a liſt, that all may know which are condemn'd, and which not; and ordain that no forrein books be deliver'd out of cuſtody, till they have bin read over. This office will require the whole time of not a few overſeers, and thoſe no vulgar men. There be alſo books which are partly uſefull and excellent, partly culpable and pernicious; this work will ask as many more officials, to make expurgations, and expunctions, that the Commonwealth of learning be not damnify'd. In fine, when the multitude of books encreaſe upon their hands, ye muſt be fain to catalogue all thoſe Printers who are found frequently offending, and forbidd the importation of their whole ſuſpected *typography*. In a word, that this your order may be exact, and not deficient, ye muſt reform it perfectly according to the model of *Trent* and *Sevil*, which I know ye abhorre to doe. Yet though ye ſhould condiſcend to this, which God forbid, the order ſtill would be but fruitleſſe and defective to that end whereto ye meant it. If to prevent ſects and ſchiſms, who is ſo unread or ſo uncatechis'd in ſtory, that hath not heard of many ſects refuſing books as a hindrance, and preſerving their doctrine unmixt for many ages, only by unwritt'n traditions. The Chriſtian faith, for that was once a ſchiſm, is not unknown to have ſpread all over *Aſia*, ere any Goſpel or Epiſtle was ſeen in writing. If the amendment of manners be aym'd at, look into Italy and Spain, whether thoſe places be one ſcruple the better, the honeſter, the wiſer, the chaſter, ſince all the inquiſitionall rigor that hath bin executed upon books.

Another reaſon, whereby to make it plain that this order will miſſe the end it ſeeks, conſider by the quality which ought to be in every licencer. It cannot be deny'd but that he who is made judge to ſit upon the birth, or death of books whether they may be wafted into this world, or not, had need to be a man above the common meaſure, both ſtudious, learned, and judicious; there may be elſe no mean miſtakes in the cenſure of what is paſſable or not; which is alſo no mean injury. If he be of ſuch worth as behoovs him, there cannot be a more tedious and unpleaſing journey-work, a greater loſſe of time levied upon his head, then to be made the perpetuall reader of unchoſen books and pamphlets, oftimes huge volumes. There is no book that is acceptable unleſſe at certain ſeaſons; but to be enjoyn'd the reading of that at all times, and in a hand ſcars legible, whereof three pages would not down at any time in the faireſt Print, is an impoſition which I cannot beleeve how he that values time, and his own

 ſtudies

JOHN MILTON *Areopagitica* LONDON, 1644 BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo